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Trauma Sensitive Schools and the PBS Framework

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GAPBS Proposal

Conference Date: December 4-5, 2018

Dr. Melissa Sadin

Attachment & Trauma Network

Abstract

Recent research in the field of interpersonal neurobiology shows that the toxic stress that results from early exposure to traumatic situations (abuse, neglect, in-utero exposures to drugs and alcohol, exposure to domestic violence, and poverty) impacts brain development. Neurobiology is a significant, and often overlooked, aspect in a child's social and emotional development. The change in brain development can be connected to bullying (both perpetrators and bullies), attendance, discipline, and to the achievement gap.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study discovered that childhood trauma leads to the adult onset of chronic diseases, depression and other mental illness, violence and being a victim of violence. The 11 ACEs the researchers measured include physical, sexual and verbal abuse, physical and emotional neglect; a family member who is depressed or diagnosed with other mental illness, addicted to alcohol or another substance, in prison, witnessing a mother being abused, losing a parent to separation, divorce or other reason.

Further, according to research from the Washington State University Area Health Education Center, children who have an ACE score of 3 are more than three times as likely to be suspended, six times more likely to experience behavioral problems, five times more likely to have severe attendance issues. They also have reduced reading ability and lower grade point averages. Thus, the number of ACEs a child has can be used to predict likelihood of needing tiered intervention supports.

Developing trauma-sensitive school systems and interventions within the PBS framework can help mitigate the impact of toxic stress on children's learning and behavior.

This workshop-- led by an experienced special educator and administrator, will define "trauma-sensitive schools" and give an overview of strategies that educators can implement within all tiers of a PBS framework to reduce discipline incidents, improve attendance, and improve academic achievement.